

Ukraine has tremendous potential. An independent, democratic Ukraine where the rule of law prevails is vital to the security and stability of Europe. Ukrainian authorities need to radically improve the election environment, however, if there is to be hope for these elections to meet those standards.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution urges the Ukrainian government to guarantee freedom of association and assembly, and it is not guaranteed now; ensure full transparency of the election process; free access for Ukrainian and international election observers; and unimpeded access by all candidates to the media on a nondiscriminatory basis.

I urge all Members to support this.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of the time.

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 415, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF S. 878, CREATING ADDITIONAL FEDERAL COURT JUDGESHIPS

Mr. SESSIONS (during consideration of H. Con. Res. 415) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-723) on the resolution (H. Res. 814) providing for consideration of the bill (S. 878) to authorize an additional permanent judgeship in the district of Idaho, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

#### BELARUS DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2004

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 854) to provide for the promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law in the Republic of Belarus and for the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus sovereignty and independence, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 854

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Belarus Democracy Act of 2004”.

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The United States supports the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in the Republic of Belarus consistent with its commitments as a participating state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

(2) The United States has a vital interest in the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus and its integration into the European community of democracies.

(3) In November 1996, Lukashenka orchestrated an illegal and unconstitutional referendum that enabled him to impose a new constitution, abolish the duly-elected parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, install a largely powerless National Assembly, and extend his term of office to 2001.

(4) Democratic forces in Belarus have organized peaceful demonstrations against the Lukashenka regime in cities and towns throughout Belarus which led to beatings, mass arrests, and extended incarcerations.

(5) Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, and Yuri Zakharenka, who have been leaders and supporters of the democratic forces in Belarus, and Dmitry Zavadsky, a journalist known for his critical reporting in Belarus, have disappeared and are presumed dead.

(6) Former Belarus Government officials have come forward with credible allegations and evidence that top officials of the Lukashenka regime were involved in the disappearances.

(7) The Belarusian authorities have mounted a major systematic crackdown on civil society through the closure, harassment, and repression of nongovernmental organizations, and independent trade unions.

(8) The Belarusian authorities actively suppress freedom of speech and expression, including engaging in systematic reprisals against independent media.

(9) The Lukashenka regime has reversed the revival of Belarusian language and culture, including through the closure of the National Humanities Lyceum, the last remaining high school where classes were taught in the Belarusian language.

(10) The Lukashenka regime harasses the autocephalic Belarusian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community, the Hindu Lights of Kalyasa community, evangelical Protestant churches (such as Baptist and Pentecostal groups), and other minority religious groups.

(11) The Law on Religious Freedom and Religious Organizations, passed by the National Assembly and signed by Lukashenka on October 31, 2002, establishes one of the most repressive legal regimes in the OSCE region, severely limiting religious freedom and placing excessively burdensome government controls on religious practice.

(12) The parliamentary elections of October 15, 2000, and the presidential election of September 9, 2001, were determined to be fundamentally unfair and nondemocratic.

(13) The Government of Belarus has made no substantive progress in addressing criteria established by the OSCE in 2000, ending repression and the climate of fear, permitting a functioning independent media, ensuring transparency of the elections process, and strengthening of the functions of parliament.

#### SEC. 3. ASSISTANCE TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BELARUS.

(a) PURPOSES OF ASSISTANCE.—The assistance under this section shall be available for the following purposes:

(1) To assist the people of the Republic of Belarus in regaining their freedom and to enable them to join the European community of democracies.

(2) To encourage free and fair presidential, parliamentary, and local elections in

Belarus, conducted in a manner consistent with internationally accepted standards and under the supervision of internationally recognized observers.

(3) To assist in restoring and strengthening institutions of democratic governance in Belarus.

(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR ASSISTANCE.—To carry out the purposes of subsection (a), the President is authorized to furnish assistance and other support for the activities described in subsection (c), to be provided primarily for indigenous Belarusian groups that are committed to the support of democratic processes.

(c) ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.—Activities that may be supported by assistance under subsection (b) include—

(1) the observation of elections and the promotion of free and fair electoral processes;

(2) development of democratic political parties;

(3) radio and television broadcasting to and within Belarus;

(4) the development of nongovernmental organizations promoting democracy and supporting human rights;

(5) the development of independent media working within Belarus and from locations outside the country and supported by nonstate-controlled printing facilities;

(6) international exchanges and advanced professional training programs for leaders and members of the democratic forces in skill areas central to the development of civil society; and

(7) other activities consistent with the purposes of this Act.

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out this section such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under paragraph (1) are authorized to remain available until expended.

#### SEC. 4. RADIO BROADCASTING TO BELARUS.

(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to authorize increased support for United States Government and surrogate radio broadcasting to the Republic of Belarus that will facilitate the unhindered dissemination of information.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—In addition to such sums as are otherwise authorized to be appropriated, there are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary for fiscal year 2005 and each subsequent fiscal year for radio broadcasting to the people of Belarus in languages spoken in Belarus.

#### SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS RELATING TO SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the sanctions described in subsection (c) should apply with respect to the Republic of Belarus until the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the Government of Belarus has made significant progress in meeting the conditions described in subsection (b).

(b) CONDITIONS.—The conditions referred to in subsection (a) are the following:

(1) The release of individuals in Belarus who have been jailed based on political or religious beliefs.

(2) The withdrawal of politically motivated legal charges against all opposition figures and independent journalists in Belarus.

(3) A full accounting of the disappearances of opposition leaders and journalists in Belarus, including Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovsky, Yuri Zakharenka, and Dmitry Zavadsky, and the prosecution of those individuals who are responsible for their disappearances.